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**THE STRUCTURE OF CONFLICT IN THE SHORT STORY
“WHO WAS MY BROTHER’S KILLER?” BY GEORGIOS M.
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In the second half of the 20th century the method of structural analysis has been widely applied in a number of humanity fields including literary studies. It is difficult to argue whether every investigation of a structural nature has its effect on philological studies or not; however, it is not inappropriate to note that some of the analyses really show new ways and directions as regards the unbiased and thorough study of the literary processes of various epochs.

Depending on the subject of interest, structure and its constituent elements may be considered in various ways. Each researcher in a particular case may identify the elements of structure necessary to carry out a particular analysis. However, at the same time, the structure of every single piece of fiction includes a set of universal elements, the ratio of which follows the same regular pattern in the micro-system (i.e. in separate parts), as well as the macro-system (i.e. the whole structure of the work). One may speak of a certain universal model of art and literature that marks all epochs and the whole artistic production of a particular age may be regarded as one of its versions. Such model permanently alters – even if an artist is unaware of the process – and every single sphere of artistic activity reflects the changes to a surprising extent.

The paper offers the analysis of a short story "Who Was My Brother's Killer?" which belongs to G. Vizyenos, one of the most interesting Greek authors of the XIX century. The principal focus of the analysis is the structure of the conflict that underlies the story.

The plot starts with the dialogue between Despinio and her two sons at one of the hotel rooms in Constantinople. Mother tells her sons about the death of their brother. Despinio's son, Hristakis, was killed in ambiguous circumstances after he had started as a postman and replaced perfidious and

sly Haralambis from his village, whom he closely resembled by appearance. The victim's parent is determined to revenge.

Search for the murderer lead Despinio to Constantinople. At this moment, a Turk youngster, Kiamil, whom she has saved in past, and his mother enter the hotel room. Mikhailos tells his brother how he first met Kiamil. It was Despinio who long time ago, in a foreign country helped a wounded Turk left to the mercy of fate by taking him to her home and nursing him like her own son. When Hristakis learned that her mother was taking care of a wounded Turk, he did not wish to return home and lived with his uncle throughout that period.

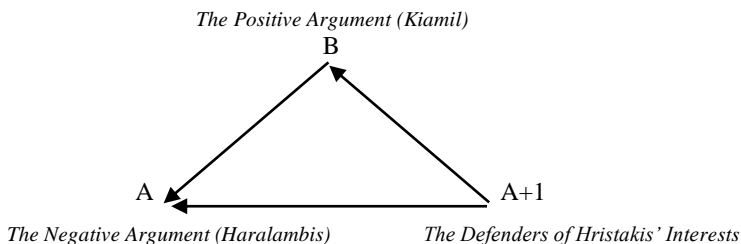
After Despinio arrives in Constantinople to find her son's murderer, the Turk's family helps her a lot. However, the truth is revealed only after Kiamil tells the following story: He eye-witnessed the murder of his blood brother as they were riding to Constantinople. Kiamil himself had a narrow escape. The father of the murdered appealed him to revenge. Wounded Kiamil, abandoned in the foreign land, was sheltered by Despinio, who nursed him like her own son. After Kiamil recovered, he found out who his blood brother's murderer was and ambushed him at the very place of the murder. The sly postman noticed a suspicious person and escaped. Then he managed to have Hristakis replace him as a postman so that he could avoid death. Fifteen days later, when Haralambis was to take the same path, Kiamil ambushed him and achieved his aim. However, he was fated to kill his stepmother's son instead of his blood brother's murderer. Kiamil has been absolutely certain that he took revenge for his blood brother's murder. It is only at the end of the story that he discovers the murderer of his stepmother's son he has been looking for so eagerly is he himself. He becomes responsible before the law for the crime committed; however, Despinio is absolutely unaware of the true course of events. After three years, the released prisoner, whose hearing and speaking faculties are sharply impaired, leaves his homeland and becomes his stepmother's servant.

The structure of conflict is clearly formed in the story and it is characterized by strictly defined static character of opposite arguments.

As a rule, the conflict based on the principle of binary opposition consists of the following items: an argument A (represented by a single individual, a group of people, a country, etc.) with a negative function (it is violent, unfair, cruel, etc.), which is opposed by argument B with a positive function (with the aim to neutralize A). Based on this structure, a conflict may develop in various ways: B may neutralize A, bringing the conflict to an end; or acquire a negative function after the neutralization and be opposed by A or those de-

fending A's interests.¹ In the story "Who Was My Brother's Killer?" one may perceive a picture somewhat similar to this, though still slightly different. The conflict is based on two central figures: 1) postman Haralambis, who killed Kiamil's blood brother; he represents argument A and has an altogether negative function, and 2) Turk Kiamil, who represents argument B with a positive function. The opposition between argument B and argument A (Haralambis) with a negative function should have resulted in the neutralization of the postman; however a tragic mistake was made and instead of Haralambis, Kiamil killed Hristakis, his stepmother's son, whose appearance closely resembled that of the murderer. If the story had followed the traditional pattern from this very moment, argument B (Kiamil), which initially had the positive function, should have acquired the negative one and should have been opposed by a new argument A+1 with the positive function represented by the defenders of murdered Hristakis' interests (family members of the victim and the offender). However, the plot develops in a different way and is characterized with as static functions and arguments. Kiamil served positive functions from the very start and became Hristakis's murderer only owing to a tragic mistake, which may be attributed to fate.

With regard to the above-mentioned, the structure of conflict may be diagrammed as follows:



The central figure of G. Vizyenos' works is a human being in general. The writer shows great interest in his fate and carefully creates his psychological portrait. G. Vizyenos presents a human tragedy and the fate as its driving force. Especially important is the interference of the destiny in the acts of heroes, which causes confrontation between the characters and prepares the foundations for the conflict – the model of the plot organization. The impact of fate on Vizyenos' characters is clearly shown throughout the plot of the story which develops through the characters' memories. In this case, too, the writer resorts to retrospection. One fatal event is the result of another and

¹ Gordeziani R., Greek Literature, I, Logos, Tbilisi 2002, 18-19.

leads to the tragic outcome through the chain reaction. The first fatal event in the story "Who Was My Brother's Killer?" is the sly postman's (an argument with the definitely negative function) attempt to have somebody else looking like him occupy his position as soon as he realizes that he is in danger of being murdered. This person turns out to be Hristakis, the writer's brother and the son of the central character of the story. The mention of the resemblance² is the first occasion that highlights the impact of destiny on the characters' fate. Resemblance in the appearances of Hristakis and Haralambis – two heroes with opposite character traits – lays the foundation for the forthcoming conflict. The second fatal event is the fact that during the whole time Despinio took care of the wounded Turk, Hristakis never appeared at home and stayed in his uncle's house for seven months. Thus, Hristakis and Kiamil never met. This fact became one of the reasons for the forthcoming tragedy. If Kiamil had known Hristakis, he would not have killed him.

The principal conflict of the story is between the postman and Kiamil together with all other characters as victims of the conflict. Owing to the tragic mistake, the Turk kills his stepmother's son. It is interesting how the "hero of the tragedy" will act in the gravest situation from the moral perspective after he realizes his mistake. Kiamil is unable to endure the moral blow and loses common sense, though he does not think about the suicide as of the way-out. He is a victim of the blind and treacherous fate. Despinio, known by her virtue, requires revenge for her son's murder, and thus there are all the preconditions for the defenders of Hristakis' interests to shift the conflict into a new phase, but here we see the static character of functions and arguments. Kiamil is arrested by the police and put into prison for three years. After serving his sentence, Kiamil works as a Despinio's servant. It is worth mentioning that the narrator does not reveal the truth to his mother, thus turning the infinite character of the conflict into the finite one.

As a conclusion, it should be said that the story "Who Was My Brother's Killer?" occupies a significant place not only among G. Vizyenos' works, but also in Modern Greek literature in general. Its chief merit lies with the finite structure of the principal conflict of the story. At the dramatic level of the story, the author adds appropriate dynamics and integrity to the conflict development. At the so-called ideological level of the plot organization, he applies another model, according to which the static character of functions and arguments gives the finite character to the plot that tends to shift the conflict into a new phase.

² Βιανός Γ.Μ., *Νεοελληνικά διηγήματα* επίμ. Παν. Μουλλάς, Εκδοτικός Οίκος Ερμής, Αθήνα, 1996, 63.